

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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INFO CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 13941

E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJECT: STUDENTS' REACTION TO SENATOR GOLDWATER'S REMARKS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: A. BANGKOK 13781

B. FBIS D050220Z SEPT 1973

1. THREE STUDENT LEADERS FROM THE NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND (NSCT) DELIVERED A LETTER OF PROTEST AT THE EMBASSY ON SEPTEMBER 4 AGAINST REMARKS ALLEGEDLY MADE BY SENATOR GOLDWATER. THE STUDENTS' LETTER CONDEMNED SENATOR GOLDWATER'S REMARKS AS AN INSULT TO THAI SOVEREIGNTY. THE THREE STUDENTS, LED BY SOMBAT THAMRONGTHANYAWONG, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE NSCT, SPOKE WITH THE PRESS ATTACHE AND TWO POLITICAL OFFICERS IN THE EMBASSY FOR ABOUT AN HOUR AND A HALF.

2. GROUPS OF STUDENTS DISTRIBUTED LEAFLETS AT BUSY INTER-SECTIONS AROUND BANGKOK ON SEPTEMBER 4 CONDEMNING GOLDWATER'S REMARKS WHICH, THE LEAFLET ARGUED, DEMONSTRATE THAT "OUR MOTHERLAND AND LIVES ARE VALUED ONLY AS AN OBJECT OF THEIR (THE U.S.) MATERIALISTIC GREED AND LUST." THE LEAFLET CALLED ON THE RTG TO DEMONSTRATE ITS PATRIOTISM AND "DECLARE TO THE WORLD THAT THE THAIS ARE NOT AMERICA'S SLAVES. THE HONOR AND DIGNITY OF THE

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THAI PEOPLE MUST BE PROTECTED..."

3. MOST OF THE ENGLISH, AND THAI, LANGUAGE PRESS RAN ARTICLES, SOME WITH PICTURES, FEATURING THE DELIVERANCE OF THE LETTER OF PROTEST AT THE EMBASSY AND PLAYING UP THE STUDENTS' REACTION. SPTTIER PLAY WAS GIVEN TO COMMENTS OF RTG OFFICIALS WHO SAID THAT WITHOUT A TEXT OF GOLDWATER'S SPEECH IT WAS DIFFICULT TO COMMENT ON WHAT HE SAID. DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER CHARTCHAI CHUN-HAWAN, HOWEVER, MADE AN EARLY AND STRONG STATEMENT SEPTEMBER 4 DEFENDING GOLDWATER. HE TOLD REPORTERS THAT GOLDWATER ACTUALLY MEANT THAT COUNTRIES WHICH WOULD OPENLY ATTACK THAILAND SHOULD BE BOMBED BY THE AMERICAN AIR FORCE. "THIS IS TO PROTECT THAILAND FROM OUTSIDE AGGRESSION." THE "BANGKOK POST" RAN AN EDITORIAL (REF B) CHARACTERIZING THE DISPUTE AS SUPERFLUOUS, BUT MOST OTHER COMMENTATORS, PARTICULARLY IN THE THAI PRESS, TENDED TO SUPPORT THE INTERPRETATION TAKEN BY THE STUDENTS.

4. SOME THREE TO FOUR THOUSAND STUDENTS FROM FOUR UNIVERSITIES RALLIED AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY SEPTEMBER 5. MOST OF THE SPEAKERS ATTACKED THE RTG OVER LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES; VERY FEW MENTIONED THE ALLEGED GOLDWATER COMMENTS. COMMENTS ABOUT AMERICAN ACTIVITIES IN THAILAND WERE DELIVERED AS ILLUSTRATIONS OF HOW THE RTG IS NOT EFFECTIVELY PROTECTING THAI NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY.

5. COMMENT: AT THE END OF OUR DISCUSSION WITH THE STUDENT LEADERS WHO CAME TO THE EMBASSY, ONE OF THEM TOOK THE PRESS ATTACHE ASIDE AND TOLD HIM NOT TO WORRY ABOUT THE ANTI-AMERICANISM OF THEIR PROTEST LETTER AND DISCUSSION. THE STUDENTS, HE SAID, WERE JOUSTING WITH THE EMBASSY AS A MEANS OF STRIKING AT THE RTG. WHILE MOST OF THE STUDENTS' DISSATISFACTIONS REST WITH ACADEMIC AND LOCAL ISSUES, WE MAY INCREASINGLY FIND OURSELVES USED AS SURROGATES FOR COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE RTG.
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